

sterilize. If your tongue swells as a result of piercing or because of an infection, it may become difficult to swallow or even breathe.

Dental Problems

Jewelry in your mouth can chip or break your teeth and fillings and erode your gums. The chronic trauma to your teeth can damage the inner pulp, resulting in the need for root canals and crowns. Jewelry can also interfere with x-rays, making diagnosis of dental conditions difficult.

Heart Problems

According to a study of 445 Mayo Clinic patients with congenital heart disease nearly 1 of 4 developed an infection of the heart after body piercing had been done.

Injury

If jewelry becomes loose, it can be swallowed or inhaled into one of your lungs, possibly requiring surgery.

Other Concerns

- Oral piercings can cause increased salivary flow and lead to drooling
- Eating, drinking and speech can all be impaired
- Permanent numbness in your tongue may develop

- Food may taste different
- Oral piercings form a place for food and plaque to gather, causing bad breath
- Allergic reactions may occur if the jewelry is poor quality

How to Care for Oral Piercings

The American Dental Association opposes the practice of oral piercing and considers it a public health hazard. If, despite the many negative side effects, you choose to pierce your tongue, lips or cheeks, you'll need to make significant hygiene and lifestyle changes to avoid infections and other complications. For the first two months, brush your tongue and irrigate the hole with antiseptic after eating, chewing gum or smoking. Then follow these guidelines:

- Brush your tongue and irrigate the hole with water daily
- Keep jewelry clean (be careful of regular jewelry cleaners, which can be toxic)
- Rinse daily with an antimicrobial or antibacterial mouthwash
- Make sure you know how to remove your jewelry for dental exams and x-rays



ORAL PIERCING



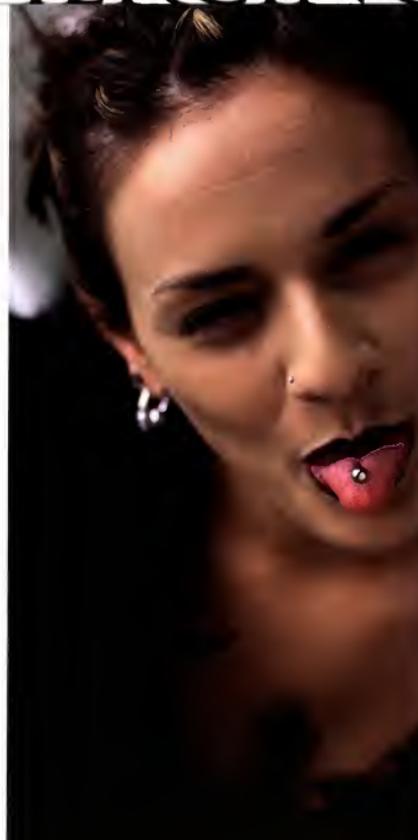
ORAL PIERCING

About Oral Piercing

Oral piercing involving the tongue, lips or cheeks has become a popular practice.

Many side effects, ranging from discomfort to serious health hazards, can result from these procedures. Anyone thinking about oral piercing should consider whether the benefits outweigh the risks.

Oral piercing is usually done without anesthetic. In tongue piercing, a needle is used to insert a barbell-shaped piece of jewelry through the middle of the tongue. At first a temporary, oversized piece of jewelry is used to accommodate swelling. After several weeks, a barbell is inserted into the hole and a ball is screwed onto the stem. If no complications develop, healing takes four to six weeks.



In lip or cheek piercing, a cork is held inside the mouth to support the tissue as it's pierced with a needle. The needle is then replaced with a stud or hoop. Healing time ranges from weeks to months.

Risks of Oral Piercing

Serious infections, such as hepatitis B and HIV, can be transmitted during oral piercings if the instruments have not been properly sterilized. Other risks include:

Pain and Bleeding

Because there are major blood vessels inside your tongue, piercing can cause prolonged bleeding. The many nerve endings in your tongue and lips can cause severe pain in the pierced area.

Infection

Infections are common in oral piercings because the mouth is full of bacteria and is difficult to